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## An Investigation of Safety in Tourism: An Experience of Young Tourists in Bangkok, Thailand

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### Abstract

The purposes of this research were to investigate the vitality of five perceptions of service quality from young international tourists who visited Bangkok, Thailand during the first quarter of 2014. The independent variables included gender, age, levels of education, occupation, and income while the dependent variables included the respondents' comments and opinions on the service provided by employees in Thai tourism. A simple random sampling method was utilized to get 400 respondents. The respondents were both male and female in the same proportion but most were between 21-25 years old. Most were married with an undergraduate degree. The average income of the respondents was between \$10,001-15,000. The findings revealed that the majority of respondents came to Thailand for the first time and spent up to 30 days in Thailand and preferred to travel at least once a year. The five service perceptions by the international tourists in descending order according to mean were reliable employees, neat and clean employees, polite employees, competent employees and timely employees.

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*Keywords:* Experience; Young International Tourists; Service Quality; Perceptions

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### 1. Introduction

Tourism is one of the most important industries for Thailand which can earn foreign currency and create service jobs. Therefore, satisfaction in services performed by Thai employees is crucial to the success of Thai tourism. Nowadays, Thai tourism has to compete with the ASEAN nations head on. It is imperative that Thai tourism must improve their service standard. Service quality has been increasingly accepted as a key factor in differentiating and building a competitive edge in the modern tourism industry. Service quality is satisfaction based on travel

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experience and service performed by employees during that travel experience. Positive experiences lead to highly satisfied tourists and a willingness to revisit or recommend the particular tourist destination to others. Tourism is one of the most important industries to create jobs and bring foreign currency to Thailand (Santiwong, 1998). The Thai economy has been known to stimulate the growth of tourism industry. In fact, there are many tourist attractions in Thailand such as historical sites, culture & art, Buddhist temples, palaces, business centres, shopping malls, and so forth. In Bangkok alone there are more than a hundred of tourist destinations which make it the number one tourist destination of the country. There are many five star hotels that offer the best quality of service and accommodations to international tourists. On the other hand, there are many areas that offer low cost accommodation for international tourists and backpackers such as the famous Khao San road, Din-so road, and Silom road. The question is how to effectively measure service quality in tourism? There has been much research about international tourists' opinion on service quality but little research about the service quality in Thai tourism from the perspective of young international tourists. Therefore, this research is aimed to study the experience of young international tourists and their needs concerning service quality during their visits in order to find the best way to develop quality service to exceed customer's expectation in order to increase customer loyalty and maintain Bangkok as the number one tourist destination of Thailand.

## **2. Review of Literature**

The study of service quality in tourism was based on the theory of SERVQUAL which was developed by Parasuraman, Zeithamal and Berry (1993). The idea of this theory is based on the difference between the expectation of service quality and the real experience of the service received. In other words, the measurement is the gap of tourists' expectation and tourists' perception. The original theory used the Likert seven-scales to measure 22 items of service in five dimensions which included assurance, empathy, reliability, responsiveness, and tangibility. The SERVQUAL is a concise and easy to use technique and can be applied to use in many different types of services. Other researchers have suggested that there should be four special questions to ask about quality (Hudson, 2008). The first question is what is important to tourists? The second question is what are the tourists' expectation? Finally, the fourth question is how did tourists express the definition of quality? It is important to know the factors influencing the decision to evaluate quality (Wongleedee, 2014). Factors influencing the quality perception may differ from one tourist to the next tourist. (Siriwan Serirut 1999) stated that there were 7 simple questions to ask in order to understand consumer behaviour; the answers of which may then be able to apply to tourists as a consumer. These questions are: Who is in the target market?, What do tourists purchase?, Why do tourists purchase?, Who participate in the purchasing process?, When do tourists purchase?, Where is the market?, and How do tourists feel after purchasing?

## **3. Methodology**

This research was aimed to study young international tourists' experience during their visit Thailand and to find out their opinions about their perceptions of quality in tourism. Also, this research is aimed to use the findings to improve tourists' satisfaction in the future. A simple sampling technique and Taro Yamane technique was performed to get a sample group that included 400 young international tourists from many different tourist destinations around Bangkok (Yamane, 1973). A Likert five-scale questionnaire was utilized as a tool for collecting data. The independent variables of this study included gender, age, level of education, occupation, and income. The dependent variables included tourists' perception of quality. Descriptive statistics utilized in this research were percentage, mean, and standard deviation.

## **4. Findings**

The findings revealed that the majority of respondents were from Europe and Australia. Male and female

respondents were approximately the same proportion or 50:50 respectively. The majority or about 85 percent had the age between 21-25 years old with an undergraduate degree. The average income from 58 percent of the respondents was about \$10,001 to \$15,000. The findings also revealed that the main objective for travelling to Thailand was to sight-see and vacation in a unique place. The majority of respondents visited Thailand for the first time and spent up to 30 days in Thailand. The average expense was about 75,000 baht or about \$3000. The majority of young international tourists preferred to travel at least once a year; and as part of their tourism experience, most preferred to use a low cost airline. Perhaps this can be explained by this sample group's demographics and income.

Table 1. Profile of the respondents.

Items	(N=400) 100%
Gender	
1. Male	50
2. Female	50
Age	
1. (1-20) years old	13
2. (21-25) years old	85
3. (26-30) years old	1
4. (Over 30) years	1
Education	
1. Up to high-school	22
2. Up to undergraduate	75
3. More than undergraduate	3
Occupation	
1. Management/Administration	15
2. Professional/ Technical	15
3. Students	54
4. No jobs	15
5. Others	1
Income/ per month	
1. (5,000- 10,000) baht	12
2. (10,001-15,000) baht	58
3. (15,001 - 20,000) baht	16
4. More than 20,000 baht	14
Purpose of travel	
1. Business	13
2. Holiday	69
3. Education	15
4. Others	3
Travel Frequency	
1. Once a year	90
2. Two to three times a year	7
3. Four to five times a year	2
4. More than five times a year	1

Table 2. Reasons for choosing low cost airline.

Items	(N=400) %
Reasons for choosing low cost airline	
1. Comfortable	11
2. Safety	1
3. Trend	1
4. Peer pressure	1
5. Low price	83
6. Convenient	3
Person who influence your decision to fly low cost	
1. Self	51
2. Spouse	11
3. Friends	32
4. Family members	1
5. Boss	1
6. Others	4
Season of travelling	
1. Summer	86
2. Other seasons	14

The findings from table 2 revealed that low price is the most important reason for young tourist as an individual to choose to travel with a low cost airline. An individual or “Me” is the most important person to make a decision to choose to fly with a low cost airline. However, summer is the most preferred season to travel.

Table 3. Tourists’ perception of service quality.

	Mean	S.D.	Rank
Service			
1. Service is provided by reliable employees	4.12	0.897	1
2. Service is provided by neat and clean employees.	3.98	0.874	2
3. Service is provided by polite employees	3.88	0.857	3
4. Service is provided by competent employees	3.79	0.987	4
5. Service is provided by timely employees.	3.64	0.881	5

The findings from table 3 revealed five different levels of tourists’ perception of employees’ service quality in Tourism as follows: 1) “Service is provided by reliable employees was rated as number one with a mean of 4.12 and 0.897 SD 2) “Serviced is provided by neat and clean employees” was rated as number two with a mean of 3.98 and 0.874 SD. 3) “Service is provided by polite employees” was rated as number three with a mean of 3.88 and 0.857 SD.4) “Service is provided by competent employees” was rated as number four with a mean of 3.79 and 0.987 SD. 5) “Service is provided by timely employees” was rated as number five with a mean of 3.64 and .881 SD.

## 5. Future Studies

One of the limitations of this paper came from the use of Likert five-scale which may not have an ability to distinguish the importance of service quality in terms of reasoning and logic. It also does not take into account the cost and service quality relationship. Therefore, the findings may not be generalized to the tourism industry properly. Hence, future research should use a combination of Likert five-scale with an in-depth interview. In other words, future studies should use a mixed method of qualitative and quantitative in order to effectively measure the service quality from the opinion of young international tourists.

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